Rebuilding Afghanistan's National Army

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In May 2002, American Green Berets began training the first group of Afghan soldiers for the new Afghan National Army (ANA). This complex mission will take years to accomplish, yet it is expected to contribute greatly to the return of peace and normalcy to Afghanistan. The United States, the main sponsor of the effort, sees the project as an effective alternative to the expansion of international security forces to police the war-devastated country. Further, the United States expects that the ANA will aid in the multilateral struggle against terrorist activity in the region.

This is the fourth time in 150 years of Afghanistan's turbulent history that the country is recreating the state military following its total disintegration caused by foreign invasions or civil wars.[1] The process of rebuilding has always been influenced by the prevailing political and social conditions in the country. The current attempt is not going to be an exception. The profound social transformation of Afghanistan during more than two decades of a devastating war has drastically changed the traditional political and social landscape of Afghanistan. The rebuilding of a national army will have to be intertwined with the creation of a legitimate broad-based government, economic reconstruction, and the demobilization process.

This article looks at the challenges facing the creation of a new national army in Afghanistan as well as the opportunities for responding to these challenges. It reviews the experience of the past as well as the recent war-instigated social and political transformation to identify conceptual frameworks for building a national military establishment in Afghanistan.

Tribal Fighters and Government Soldiers

Few of Afghanistan's armies have successfully monopolized the legitimate use of force. The Afghan army generally has not been the only military institution within a social system imbued with military pluralism. The country

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traditionally has relied on popular uprisings to fight foreign invasions and enlisted the aid of tribal levies to beef up the regular army to crush domestic rebellions. The situation reflects the evolving nature of state-society relations since the emergence of Afghanistan as a modern state at the end of the 19th century. It was then a loose conglomerate of tribes and ethnic communities over which the central government had varying degrees of control at different times.

Until the middle of the 20th century, the central government in Afghanistan was not strong enough to integrate the nation through a wide network of political and economic institutions. Society remained segmented and unmobilized. The lack of integration made the communities, particularly in tribal areas, semi-independent, mostly relying on their own resources and their own traditional institutions. This included local military forces that were mobilized during inter-tribal conflicts or foreign threats. The tribal militias also could be mustered in support of or against the central government during domestic disturbances. This nation-in-arms helped the country survive when the central government collapsed or the state army disintegrated in the face of foreign invasion.

These unique sociopolitical conditions favored the development of a national culture of guerrilla warfare.[2] This was an indigenous form of guerrilla warfare, which in strategic terms was different from the one conceptualized by Mao Zedong. The latter aims at seizing state power through organizing "liberated zones,"[3] while the Afghan model is defensive in nature and tactical in scope. Khushal Khan Khattak, the renowned 17th-century Pashtun national leader and thinker clearly detailed the guerrilla tactics of the Afghan highlanders:

> When you fight a smaller enemy detachment you should decisively attack with surprise. But, if the enemy receives reinforcement [or] when you encounter a stronger enemy force, avoid decisive engagement and swiftly withdraw only to hit back where the enemy is vulnerable. By this you gain sustainability and the ability to fight a long war of attrition. . . . A war of attrition eventually frustrates the enemy, no matter how strong he may be . . . and that gives a chance of victory to a small force fighting against an invading army.[4]

It was in such a setting that the tribal warrior felt at home. It was quite a challenge to transform such a fighter into a soldier in a disciplined army ruled by a professional ethos and regulated by conventional military norms.

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The primacy of tribal and local loyalty among the soldiers impaired the army's commitment to the government cause. The army was often crudely organized and led, inadequately armed, poorly trained, meagerly paid, and badly fed. Such an army was hardly capable of standing firm in the face of a determined foe. However, the same soldiers would fight with utmost determination with their kinsmen in their own space under the leadership of their local chiefs. A British observer of the Afghan society, Edward Hensman, wrote in 1881: "The Afghan does not lack native courage, and in hill warfare he is unrivaled, so long as it takes the shape of guerrilla fighting. But once he is asked to sink his identity and to become merely a unit in a battalion, he loses all self-confidence and is apt to think more of getting away than of stubbornly holding his ground as he would have done with his own friends led by his own chief."[5]

The government's legitimacy stemmed from dynastic rights or was based on military power. Both could be challenged by other contenders. This situation was detrimental to the army's loyalty. Governments often invoked Islam and potential threats by "infidel" foreign powers to motivate soldiers to serve the Islamic ruler (*padshah-e Islam*) and his government.[6] Although Islam united the society in common cause and *jihad* against alien powers and ideology, it did not politically weld the communities to create a religion-based ideal Islamic nation or *umma*. As T. A. Heathcote notes, the system, "which ordered the life of most people outside the city areas, was certainly as potent in political terms as the national state system of Europe in 1914. Men felt a fierce loyalty to their own tribe, such that, if called upon they would without hesitation assemble in arms under their own tribal chiefs and local clan leaders."[7]

Recruitment for the regular army has always been difficult. Weak government control of the country and lack of resources hindered both compulsory and voluntary enlistment. In 1895, the government introduced a partial draft system called *hasht nafari*, whereby one man in eight was called to serve in the army. The recruitment quota was imposed on the population of a district or a tribal area. Under this system, the recruits, selected by drawing names (*peshk*), had the option of paying for exemption or they could choose to pay for a substitute (*ewaz*). The *hasht nafari* underwent several modifications after the turn of the 20th cen-

tury, until it was replaced by a universal draft system in 1941. The draft was an extremely unpopular system and was never fully implemented. Many people even migrated to neighboring countries to escape the harsh enforcement of *hasht nafari.*[8] Public discontent intensified in the 1920s when King Amanullah tried to firmly enforce the system. This move caused tribal unrest.[9]

In such a socio-political environment, the state armies were faced with two major challenges: creating a national loyalty among the soldiers that would surpass their tribal allegiance, and providing the military units with the skills to fight effectively in both counterinsurgencies and conventional wars. The response to both challenges was slow and unsteady. The pace of progress was linked to social and political development, expansion of government influence through economic modernization, and the availability of resources to increase the army's professional effectiveness.

Evolution of National Armed Forces

In the mid-1860s, a deserting Afghan soldier justified his defection from the army by telling the beleaguered Amir Sher Ali: "Your kingship is unstable, the service incentives are unattractive, and I am longing for home."[10] The statement encapsulates the problems that Afghan governments have faced in raising and maintaining a regular army in a tribal society.

Traditionally the Afghan governments relied on three military institutions: the regular army, tribal levies, and community militias. The regular army was sustained by the state and commanded by government leaders. The tribal or regional levies (irregular forces) had part-time soldiers provided by tribal or regional chieftains under pre-negotiated contracts. The chiefs received tax breaks, land ownership, cash payment, or other privileges in return. The community militia included all available able-bodied members of the community, mobilized to fight for common causes under community leaders. Each of these institutions had certain strengths and weaknesses.

The combination of these military institutions created a formidable force whose components supplemented each other's strengths and minimized their weaknesses. The regular army's conventional military capacity was supplemented by the tribal levies' skills in guerrilla warfare. The community militias were able to secure the army's lines of communication in their areas and provide logistical support. On the other hand, disharmony or lack of cooperation among these institutions caused the regular army enormous difficulties.

The evolution of Afghanistan as a unified nation has been influenced by the interplay of the country's different military institutions. Overreliance on irregular forces cost the government control of the tribes, while maintaining a strong military depleted the government's limited resources, hindering the nation-building process.

During the turbulent years of the early 19th century, the government army in Afghanistan consisted of the followers of various tribal chiefs whose al-

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legiance to the Amir was unpredictable. Their shifting alliances with power-seekers kept the state politically unstable. Amir Sher Ali Khan (1863-78), is credited with founding the modern national army in Afghanistan. He tried to curb the influence of the tribal chiefs and their irregular forces by creating a modern army.[11] He introduced a modern system of recruitment based on voluntary military service, as well as an ethnic balance of military units and the integration of some irregular troops into the state army.[12]

At the outbreak of the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80), the regular army was about 50,000 strong and consisted of 62 infantry and 16 cavalry regiments, with 324 guns mostly organized in horse and mountain artillery batteries.[13] However, much of the organization existed only on paper. Poor training, lack of unit discipline, lack of unit cohesiveness, and inadequate officer education made the army a paper tiger. The army lost cohesiveness after initial clashes with invading British forces in 1878 and ceased to exist as an organized force after its defeat in Charasia, near Kabul. Yet elements of the fragmented army joined the tribesmen and civilian militia to put up a firm resistance against the British forces, forcing them out in 1880.

Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901), who succeeded to the throne after the second Anglo-Afghan War, had to recreate the army from scratch. He faced the enormous challenges of reunifying the country, strengthening internal security, and subduing semi-independent chieftains. His main instrument in responding to these challenges was a powerful army subsidized by the British. Instead of the leader's traditional reliance on military contingents provided by tribal chiefs or the feudal levy system, the Amir tried to create an army totally linked to the state.[14] However, the enormity of the task far outstripped the government's military capacity. The Amir was forced to rely on tribal militia that numbered up to 40,000 during the pacification of Hazarajat (1891-93).[15] The Amir's heavy-handed policy took its toll in later years when the simmering political discontent expressed itself violently on several occasions during the politically-relaxed reign (1901-19) of Amir Habibullah.

King Amanullah (1919-29) established the legitimacy of his reign by waging a successful anti-British war to regain full independence. However, he lost support among the tribes due to his drastic modernization reforms. Amanullah's push for rapid modernization was not matched by efforts to build an effective military force to back his reforms. Counting on the nation's martial

qualities to deter foreign threats, the reformist monarch did not see a compelling need for a large army.[16] His neglect had a disastrous impact. Most of the modernization plans were not implemented, the size of the military was ruthlessly cut, and troops were poorly trained and ineffectively led. The army soon shrank to 23,000 and eventually to 11,000 because of recruitment problems. His last-minute effort in 1928 failed to reverse the decline, and consequently the Afghan army failed to quell the 1928-29 rebellion that cost Amanullah his throne and plunged the country into civil war.

The modernization of the Afghan army that began in the first quarter of the 20th century was a slow and incremental process. The national army became more attached to the government and acquired a solid institutional identity as the country underwent a process of integration through a nationwide education system, economic progress, and political development.

Nadir Shah (1929-33) oversaw the reconstruction and improvement of the army as a key element in responding to security challenges and supporting a measured modernization process. By 1933, the army numbered some 70,000. The Afghan military college was reopened in 1930, and training was modeled on the old Turkish army. The development of a national recruitment system and the professional education of officers and NCOs were among the major achievements of the Afghan military in the first half of the 20th century. The introduction of modern weapons into the army—particularly combat aircraft, armored vehicles, artillery, and automatic weapons—brought a landmark shift in the correlation of forces between the center and the tribal areas. The superior firepower of the state army served to prevent domestic security challenges.[17]

In the mid-20th century, foreign policy exigencies and domestic needs to back rapid modernization of the society spurred a major reorganization of the armed forces. The partitioning of India in 1947 touched off an irredentist Afghan campaign demanding the creation of an independent Afghan-linked "Pashtunistan" in Pakistan's Pashtun areas. These areas were part of Afghanistan before they were annexed by the British in the 19th century. The country also needed a modern army to support economic development and social reforms, including education and women's issues. As the United States turned down Afghan demands for military assistance, Kabul turned to the Soviet Union for military and economic aid.

Soviet assistance enabled Afghanistan to improve the structure, armament, training, and command and control system of its armed forces. The strength of the military in the 1960s reached 98,000, with 90,000 in the army and 8,000 in the air force.[18]

Politicization and Disintegration of the Army

Despite the steady progress in modernizing and training the army and the development of the air force under King Zaher Shah (1933-73), the Afghan military establishment failed to reach the level of professional maturity necessary to

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resist politicization. Political naivete of the peasant-based officer corps allowed a handful of politically motivated mid- and low-level officers to stage two military coups in the 1970s that eventually brought the communists to power in 1978. Armed resistance to the "Saur Revolution" plunged the country into a devastating civil war leading to the Soviet military intervention (1979-89) and increased Western support of the Islamic-led anti-regime resistance forces, the mujahideen.

Simultaneous, rapid, and large-scale arming of opposing forces brought a major portion of the population under arms in the 1980s.[19] The trend continued during the post-communist civil war (1992-2001), as neighboring countries and other international actors armed rival Afghan factions. The process gradually de-professionalized the armed forces and gave power to a variety of ethnic and regional factions, self-serving warlords, and criminal freebooters.[20]

The fall of the Moscow-backed communist regime in Kabul in 1992 disintegrated the state as well as the army. Bits and pieces of the fragmented military either disappeared or joined the warring factions that were locked in a drawn-out power struggle. The warring factions were composed of odd assortments of armed groups with varying levels of loyalties, political commitment, professional skills, and organizational integrity. Many of them felt free to switch sides, shift loyalties, and join or leave the larger group spontaneously. They possessed neither the strength of the anti-Soviet *jihad* warriors nor the discipline of regular forces. They were haunted by the weaknesses of both.

In 2001-02, exploiting the sudden fall of the Taliban to the US-led coalition air strikes, the Northern Alliance, the only organized anti-Taliban military faction in Afghanistan, moved swiftly to fill the vacuum. The absence of a credible political alternative to the Taliban blocked the emergence of an ethnically balanced post-Taliban government. The anti-Taliban Pashtun forces that took over in most of the southern provinces were too scattered to offer a counterbalancing bloc vis-à-vis the Northern Alliance.

Taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity, the noncommitted warlords were attracted by Western cash outlays and joined the fray for easy victories. Their militias expanded overnight. On paper the country now (in early summer 2002) has over 40 divisions and dozens of separate brigades. Many of the divisions

are led by Panjshiri commanders.[21] Many others are commanded by leaders closely connected with the Panjshiri faction. Out of the current eight "army corps," the Northern Alliance controls six.[22] Further, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Deputy Minister of Defense, maintains his own seven-division army in the north.[23] Several divisions are under central command.[24] Most of these units are composed of armed groups affiliated with warlords and their allies who jumped onto the anti-Taliban bandwagon as the radical militia crumbled under the weight of the coalition bombing campaign. The armed groups that occupied the military posts and localities deserted by the Taliban and their foreign supporters gained the status of military units from the Northern Alliance leaders who simply wanted to expand their allies. Now the Afghan Ministry of Defense provides funds to finance this extraordinary military inflation.[25]

Back to the Future

As Afghanistan begins to emerge from a long period of devastating conflict, the country sifts through the rubble of social and political destruction to try to piece together a peaceful future. Security is the essential prerequisite for the effort. It involves reconstruction of a national army and disbanding the factional militias and private armies. Rebuilding the Afghan armed forces cannot be done in a vacuum. Unless the issues that divided the country are addressed through the emergence of a legitimate, broad-based, effective, and internationally backed government, it will be hard to build a nationally oriented and professionally skilled army. The major challenge is to create a military loyal to the state.

Currently the country is politically and militarily fragmented. Ethnic warlords with questionable track records claim to represent different ethnic groups and geographic regions in the country. Despite their nominal support of the interim administration in Kabul, provincial strongmen and warlords maintain their private armies, sources of income, foreign linkages, and autonomous administrations. Even the Northern Alliance militia that controls Kabul is a partisan army with factional loyalties. Any solution that perpetuates the leadership of these warlords will be detrimental to long-term peace and stability. This will also hinder the development of national harmony that has suffered heavy blows during the long civil war in Afghanistan.

The first step toward building a national army in Afghanistan is broadening the base of the government, which will promote political stability, public trust, and security in the country. Such a government will be able to direct the re-creation of a nationally oriented, ethnically balanced, morally disciplined, professionally skilled, and operationally coherent Afghan army and force the local militias to disarm and disband. An army perceived as a means of furthering the ambitions of a single political or ethnic group, on the other hand, would not lead to an effective demobilization effort. Another condition needed for the emergence of a reliable military establishment is reconstruction of the Afghan economy, offering alternative employment for former combatants not integrated into the new army.

Ethnic Balance

Given the ethnic politicization and polarization of the country, the new Afghan army has to be multi-ethnic at all levels. The pre-war Afghan army was an ethnically balanced force. Indeed, Afghanistan has a long history of providing for ethnic balance in the military establishment. The alternative—creating ethnically homogeneous military units—has proved in the past to be problematic. While soldiers of homogeneous units understood each other and easily worked together, their loyalty could not be trusted when the military moved against their home turf. In such cases the government usually disarmed units affiliated with the revolting area or tribe.[26]

The draft system in place after 1941 ensured ethnic diversity in army formations. Recruits from different ethnic and geographic communities were integrated into professional military outfits. The army was both a security force and a national educational institute where Afghan youth also received literacy and civic education. In fact, the army was the most significant integrating institution in the multi-ethnic Afghan society. The officer corps before 1963 was not all-inclusive, however, and was dominated by Pashtuns and Tajiks. But with the beginning of the democratic period in 1963, cadets for officer and NCO training schools were selected from all provinces and all ethnic communities under a quota system proportional to the population. The officer corps thus was ethnically diverse beginning in the late 1960s.

The draft system is not likely to work under current conditions, however, for political, professional, and economic reasons. First, the nascent postwar central government is not powerful enough to enforce a draft system. Second, an army of conscripts who serve for only a short time can hardly acquire the skills, experience, and cohesiveness needed to respond to the enormous security challenges of the current situation. Third, the economic hardship faced by the nation dissuades people from acquiescing to induction into a poorly paid draft army. Most of the young people are supporting their families and have to earn money.

While the Afghan government envisages an ethnically balanced army, there is a lot of suspicion that the Tajiks who now control the military are influencing the ethnic mix of the newly formed ANA battalions. There are reports that in newly formed units the Tajiks outnumber other ethnicities, including the Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan.[27] Persistence of such suspicions can undermine the demobilization of factional militias and will need to be addressed.

The greatest challenge facing the new army, however, is to integrate the multi-ethnic military units into unified professional outfits. This professional cohesion can be achieved through a "chemical" integration of the soldiers rather than their "physical" combination—"the bonding together of members of an organization/unit in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, their unit, and the mission."[28] Only with such cohesiveness will the soldiers' professional loyalty surpass their ethnic, political, and regional allegiance. This can oc-

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cur only after a long period of joint training and experience when members of a unit deal with common challenges, fight together, suffer together, work together, and live together. The longer the association, the tighter the bonding. But it takes a healthy political and service environment, systematic training, and effective leadership to achieve such unit cohesion. A 1995 attempt to integrate factional fighters into professional military units failed because of political instability.[29]

Structure of the Military Establishment

The size, structure, and professional training of the army will depend on the nature of potential threats, the mission, the area of operations, and available resources. The immediate threats are expected to be domestic and concern internal security. Security threats may stem from anti-government armed challenges by political and religious militants, foreign-inspired rebellions, and infighting between local warlords. Further, Afghanistan is located in an important strategic area and has to face potential threats emerging from a volatile and dangerous neighborhood. Interstate conflicts coupled with religious militancy, organized crime, and smuggling constitute potential threats to the whole region.

Given the geopolitical situation and available defensive capacity, it is unrealistic to expect the ANA to respond to potential foreign threats. In the foreseeable future, Afghanistan will have to depend on international security arrangements and backing to deal with such external threats. The country has long suffered from outside interference and is still vulnerable to foreign instigation and support of renegade factions and militant forces. Afghanistan will need international protection against such foreign intervention. Afghanistan as a nation has a great potential for mobilizing its people to fight foreign invasions, but experience also suggests that the nationwide defensive capacity needs to be harnessed to support the continuity of the unified state in the current postwar period. With international support, Afghanistan has the potential to build a mobile, professionally effective regular military force that can then serve as a deterrent against direct foreign military threats.

The mission of the new Afghan army should be clearly defined in the context of the country's new military doctrine.[30] In the past, the lack of clarity in

defining the army's role caused a great deal of organizational and operational confusion. This ambiguity hampered the unit structure, equipment, and training of the army. As a result the army was neither an effective internal security force nor a reliable body for large-scale conventional warfare. Given the prevailing geopolitical setting and political environment in and around Afghanistan, the ANA is expected to provide military backing for the central government, which will entail offsetting the factional militias, disarming illegal armed groups, and backing up law enforcement agencies and other security forces in the country.

Given the nature of the threat, the army's mission, and the extent of the possible area of operations across the country, Afghanistan needs a military force capable of rapid deployment to any part of the country. This requires an army with high maneuverability and effectiveness. Such an army needs to be composed of three elements: garrison troops, mobile contingents, and a central rapid deployment force. The garrison troops manning the regional bases of operation will facilitate local stability, maintain the lines of communication, and provide logistical support. The mobile troops—with airlift capability—will respond to security threats in their zone of deployment. The central rapid deployment force will serve as the central reserve, responding to crises in any military zone.

The size of the new Afghan army also depends on available resources. The international community has made generous commitments to fund the reconstruction of Afghanistan. However, few countries have pledged funds for building and training the national Afghan army and security forces. Since security is essential for restoring political stability and the reconstruction of the Afghan economy, the creation of the national army should be a top priority in allocating available funds. Afghanistan intends to build a 60,000-strong army, an 8,000-man air force, a 12,000-man border guard, and a 70,000-member police force.[31] The cost of organizing, training, arming, and maintaining such a large force is phenomenal by Afghan standards. Insufficient funding will be devastating to the plan.

The cost effectiveness of the army is closely linked to the level of professional training of the military units. US Special Forces are conducting training courses for several 600-strong battalions over an 18-month period that began in May 2002. Each course lasts for ten weeks. The Green Berets are expected to train 9,600 soldiers for the regular army and 3,000 for the border forces before the Afghan instructors take over the training. Obviously this basic training is the first step. It will have to be followed up by long periods of subsequent instruction, specialized combat and combat support training, small and large unit maneuvers, and command and staff exercises.

To develop effective military cohesion, leadership—particularly at the small unit level—is of vital importance. This further signifies the need for a highly trained and professionally effective officer and NCO corps, which is currently conspicuously absent in Afghanistan. The former trained officers are getting old, and the young officers lack adequate professional training. Many are former guerrilla fighters with no education. Many are illiterate. It will take at

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least ten years for Afghanistan to build a qualified officer corps, one which can help restore the military culture and replicate the units trained by the international community.

Command and Control

As an instrument of politics, the Afghan armed forces should be subordinated to popular civilian control. This is going to be a major challenge in Afghanistan, where armed groups and militias have long been involved in politics. Also, the new Afghan army will be engaged mostly in conducting internal security missions. While external threats normally produce stable civil-military relations, involvement of the army in dealing with internal threats is conducive to unstable civil-military relations. The latter can be avoided by achieving and securing the participation of the people in politics, and blocking the dominance of special interest groups. Creating a national security council at the highest level of government and a civil-military council at the ministry of defense level might prove beneficial.

The operational command and control of the army should be assigned to a joint armed forces chief of staff (JAFCS), who will control not only the army and the air force but also the border guards. Six military zone (corps) commands need to be created to command and control the regional forces.[32] These forces will include garrison troops, line of communication units, road construction units, and army aviation formations (transport aircraft and combat helicopters). Other elements will include heavy artillery units, logistics formations, and military education institutions. Depending on the level of threat, a number of mobile brigades could be attached to the zone commands. The newly formed battalions are to be grouped in combined-arms brigades, the main operational formation in the army under regional corps. The central rapid deployment force, with both army and air force components, will have to be placed under a separate command under the JAFCS.[33]

Traditionally a large portion of the Afghan army was deployed along the "Durand line." This area, covering the Pashtun belt straddling the Afghan-Pakistan border, faced potential British military action in the 19th and early 20th centuries and was considered the front line during the "Pashtunistan" dispute with Pakistan in the second half of the 20th century. It is still the most unstable area in the region. The current distribution of military forces is not in conformity with strategic exigencies but is the outcome of the factional war. The bulk of the forces

are now concentrated in the north and the west and less in the east and the south.[34] A redeployment and reorganization of the corps will be needed.

Demobilization and Reintegration

The demobilization of the civil war combatants and their reintegration into the society is one of the greatest challenges facing postwar Afghanistan. According to Afghan government sources, there are over 200,000 irregular militia combatants and war veterans dispersed throughout the country. They include three types of armed groups: the "formal" factional militias that were involved in the civil war, the "bandwagoners" who seized the opportunity to join the winning side in the anti-Taliban war, and the freebooters who filled the vacuum created by the sudden demise of the Taliban. The first group of armed men is closely attached to the warring factions and loyal to the regional leaders. They are expected to survive longer than the others. The last two groups of fighters are mostly incorporated by local warlords.

Some local commanders have shown interest in downsizing their militias because they cannot pay them. But other local warlords, who have access to drug money and other resources, continue to expand their forces or draw freebooters to their ranks.[35] In recent months limited disarmament attempts have been made in Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif, Herat, and Smangan. Most of the disarmament has affected the freebooters who are not affiliated with local warlords. There are also reports that powerful local commanders are disarming their adversaries as a means to increase their influence.[36]

Random disarmament efforts, however, are not an effective approach. Unless a systematic demobilization program is put in place, the unemployed combatants will return to violence and banditry or join the holdouts of militant groups and terrorists. Creating opportunities for peaceful employment would encourage militia members to leave the warlords and thus help the national demobilization process. The United Nations favors an inverse model of the traditional sequence of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, suggesting instead a program of reintegration and demobilization that would provide alternative employment for the former combatants before they are actually disarmed. This requires funds for launching quick-impact and labor-intensive projects to absorb former combatants. With the restoration of the public work force (*Qowaye Kar*), agricultural assistance force (*Qowaye Sabz*) and creation of a demining army and a drug control force, tens of thousands of former militia members could be reintegrated and demobilized. The pace of demobilization also will depend on the process of building the new army and police force, the scope and speed of economic reconstruction, and the restoration of the education system and government bureaucracy.

The demobilization process will need to be supervised by a national commission of demobilization and reintegration. Until the national army becomes operationally effective, parts of the regional militias will have to be maintained as local security forces under strict control of the central government.

They should be registered, trained, and reeducated in a professional ethos. Qualified combatants could be recruited for the national army and the police force. The militias' heavy weapons are to be collected by the national commission and stored in secure depots.

The implementation of such an ambitious plan requires significant international support and cooperation from neighboring countries. This is an extremely challenging project. But there are no easy, inexpensive solutions to the process of demobilizing hundreds of thousands of combatants and armed men who know little more than fighting.

Conclusion

Rebuilding Afghanistan's national army is not only an essential element in stabilizing the war-torn country but also a contribution to the effectiveness of the US-led international war on terrorism in South and Central Asia. It is a highly cost-effective project, but also an expensive and lengthy endeavor. Its success is linked to three major variables: the emergence of a legitimate broad-based government, the availability of resources, and time. A legitimate government will encourage the regional forces to dissolve their militias in the interest of creating a national army. Resources for the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan will provide favorable conditions for demobilization and reintegration of the combatants, and for building an effective military establishment. And, finally, the process will take time to reach fruition. Serious and continued US engagement, perseverance, and support is essential to build an effective national army in Afghanistan, one that will hold a monopoly on the legitimate use of force in support of empowering the central government and stabilizing the country.

NOTES

1. In the 1870s Amir Sher Ali Khan recreated the Afghan army that disintegrated during the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80). In the 1880s Amir Abdur Rahman had to reestablish the army to unify the fragmented country. The army was remodeled under King Amanullah following the third Anglo-Afghan War (1919), but it met a fatal blow during the civil war of 1929. A new military establishment was created by Nadeshah after his accession in 1929. The Soviet-sponsored reorganization and modernization of the Afghan army began in the 1960s and continued through the Moscow-backed communist rule. It was totally disintegrated during the civil war of 1992-2001.

2. The British forces faced major challenges in responding to this mode of warfare in the tribal areas of the northwest frontier. See General Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing it On, Short Talks on Tribal Fighting on the Northwest Frontier of India* (Aldershot and London: Gale and Polden, 1932), pp. 2-12.

3. See Peter Paret et al., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), p. 841.

4. Khoshal Khan Khattak, *Dastarnama,* a classic treatise on norms and practice of leadership (in Pashto) (Kabul: 1967), p. 56.

5. See Edward Hensman, *The Second Afghan War* (London: 1881), p. 329.

6. Each soldier of the regular army under Sher Ali was issued a copy of the Koran. The soldiers were required to study the Holy Scripture with the company's mullah, who led them in religious rituals during off-duty hours. L. N. Sobolev*, Stranitsa iz Istorii Vostochnovo Voprosa* ("A Page from the History of the Eastern Question"), cited in *Istoriya Vorozhoniekh Sil Afganistana 1747-1977* ("The History of Armed Forces of Afghanistan 1747-1977"), ed. U. V. Gankovsky (Moscow: 1985), p. 45.

7. T. A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars* (London: 1980), p. 9.

8. Gankovsky, p. 65.

9. Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan 1914-1929* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 210.

10. My conversation in Kabul in 1962 with an Afghan veteran who was quoting an eyewitness of the event in the 1860s in Kabul when Amir Sher Ali was supervising the payment of government soldiers before moving against his rivals.

11. It was probably the first time the Afghan army was being regularly trained, with the help of field manuals translated from English into Pashto and Dari. See Gankovsky, pp. 44-45.

12. *Turkistanskii Vedomostii* ("Turkistan Official Bulletin") 1877, No. 25, in Gankovsky, p. 37.

13. The army had received 29,000 muzzle-loading and 5,000 breach-loading (Snider) rifles from the British government. The army also had 30,000 other firearms, mostly muzzle-loading muskets, smooth-bore and rifled. See *The Second Afghan War 1878-80*, Official Account, pp. 14-15, and Appendix 1, pp. 633-35.

14. At the death of the Amir the regular army consisted of 80 infantry battalions, 40 cavalry regiments, 100 artillery batteries, and 4,000 household troops. The overall strength of the army was 90,000.

15. Hasan Kakar, *Afghanistan, A Study in Internal Political Development 1880-1896* (Kabul: 1971), pp. 165-66.

16. In July 1923 Amanullah told the people, "These are the days of the pen, not of the sword . . . therefore send your sons to school. Our martial qualities are sufficient, it is education that we lack." Stewart, p. 209.

17. This, coupled with a state-funded education system and economic development programs, helped national integration and expansion of central government control. The situation enabled the army to successfully respond to simultaneous internal disturbances, including the Katawz rebellion in 1937-39, the Shinwari revolt of 1938, Alizai-Durani unrest in 1939, and the 1944-45 rebellion of the Safi tribe in eastern Kunar province.

18. The armed forces also included a 21,000-strong gendarmerie organized in battalions and regiments and a 25,000-strong Public Works Force organized in companies, battalions, and construction units.

19. The United States sent $5 billion worth of weapons to the mujahideen during 1986-90, while the Soviet Union provided an estimated $5.7 billion (US) worth of weapons to Kabul during the same period. See Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), p. 179.

20. In 1990-91 the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan increasingly relied on militia units or paramilitary forces. The regime was finally overthrown by the defection of the major militia formation to the mujahideen. See M. N. Azimi, *Ordu wa Siasat dar Seh Daha-ye Akhir* ("Army and Politics in the Last Three Decades"), (Peshawar: 1998), pp. 400, 417-23, 491, 512-32.

21. Ahmad Rashid, "Security Concerns Mount in Afghanistan As country Enters Critical Reconstruction Phase," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 19 March 2002.

22. The Central Corps (four divisions, all in Kabul), 1st Corps in Nangrahar (two divisions), 2d Corps in Kandahar (three divisions), 3d Corps in Paktia (three divisions), 4th Corps in Herat (three divisions and several new units made up of former mujahideen), 5th Corps in Charikar (three divisions), 6th Corps in Baghlan-Takhar (three divisions), 7th Corps in Mazar-e Sharif (four divisions). The total strength on paper is estimated at 700,000, while the actual strength is around 200,000. My interviews with several Afghan military officers in Kabul, March 2002.

23. The divisions are deployed in Mazar-e Sharif, Jawzjan, Sar-e Pul, Hairatan, and Mamaymaneh.

24. These divisions are 1st and 31st in Kabul, 34th in Bamian, 36th in Logar, 41st in Ghor, 42d in Wardak, 71st in Farah, 100th in Laghman, and 27th in Qalat. Twenty-seven Border Guard brigades are being formed.

25. Author's conversation with several Afghan officials, including Defense Minister Qasim Fahim, Kabul, June 2002.

26. For example, in 1912 during a rebellion in Paktia, the Amir ordered the Mangal and Zadran regiments in Kabul and Jalalabad to be disarmed. Similarly, in 1938 the disturbances in the eastern district of Shinwar prompted the government to disarm Shinwari troops based in Jalalabad.

27. David Rohde, "Training an Afghan Army that Can Shoot Straight," *The New York Times*, 6 June 2002.

28. Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion, The Human Element in Combat* (Washington: NDU Press, 1985), p. 4.

29. Recruits from five main political parties could stay together for only seven months before they deserted the government "army" in response to the instructions from the leaders of their quarreling parties.

30. Afghanistan has never had an official military doctrine defining the country's defense policy and directing the creation of a strategic-technological infrastructure to support its implementation.

31. Michael Christie, "Afghanistan's New National Army Slowly Takes Shape," Reuters, Kabul, 2 June 2002.

32. These zones could be the central, eastern and southeastern, southwestern, western, northern, and northeastern zones.

33. The combined-arms brigade will consist of three light infantry battalions, a tank battalion, an artillery regiment, a reconnaissance company, a technical unit, an engineer company, a signal company, an air defense battery, and a logistical support unit.

34. Five corps are in the north and the west, and three corps are in the south and east.

35. International Crisis Group Report, "Afghanistan Briefing, Securing Afghanistan: The Need for More International Action," Kabul/Brussels, 15 March 2002, p. 8.

36. UN General Secretary's Report to General Assembly (No. A/56/875-S/22002/22278), *The Situation in Afghanistan and Its Implications for International Peace and Security*, 18 March 2002.